

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> See *The Reformed Imperative*, John Leith, John Knox Press (Atlanta, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in "Trendier Than Thou," Paul Seabury, *Harpers*, October, 1978, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> A phrase and conviction acquired from Dr. Frank Harrington, pastor of the Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta.

<sup>4</sup> From a doctoral thesis by the Rev. Robert R. Kopp, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Thesis written for Drew University, April, 1982.

<sup>5</sup> See Matthew 22:36-39.

<sup>6</sup> See sermon by Dr. David B. Watermulder, "Ripe For Reformation," preached at the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

<sup>7</sup> James W. Jones, *Filled With New Wine* (1974).

## Closing Benediction

Go forth into the world in peace,  
Be of good courage,  
Hold fast to that which is good,  
Render to no one evil for evil,  
Support the weak,  
Help the afflicted,  
Honor all persons,  
Love and serve the Lord  
Rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit,  
And the blessings of Almighty God:  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
Abide with you and remain within you  
Both now and forevermore,

Amen.

## Renewal in Christ

If You Only Knew

John 4:7-10; 39-43

Rev. Dr. Samuel H. Moffett

Professor Emeritus,

Princeton Theological Seminary,

Princeton, New Jersey

A week or so ago Eileen and I went to a Chinese restaurant in Dubuque and this is what Eileen's fortune cookie told her, "You will very soon achieve perfection." I was moderately surprised, and have been watching her very closely ever since. I regret to report, "Not yet." And if it is perfection you are looking for here at this conference, you have come to the wrong conference. I am not going to be talking about perfection this evening. I want to speak about renewal, which is a very different thing.

My text is summed up in two phrases from the 4th chapter of the Gospel of John. "If you only knew who it is that asked you for a drink..." (vs. 10); and "I am the Messiah" (vs. 26). The chapter is about a woman and a man and the water in the well. The woman was something less than an ideal woman, and the man was much more than an ideal man, and the water, well, the water in the well finally led to the waters of renewal. For renewal begins in many ways. There in Samaria it began with water, but however it may begin, all its paths must lead to the right answer to the question the woman at the well forgot to ask Jesus. She forgot to ask him, "Who are you?"

All they talked about at first was water, ordinary, common well water. You remember how when Jesus came into Samaria that day on his way to Galilee, he was thirsty and asked a Samaritan woman for water. And she thought she already knew who he was, a Jew, so she said, "Why ask *me* for a drink. You're a Jew. I'm a Samaritan." Which was of course a perfect opening for a rousing sermon on the sins of racism. But Jesus, who so often surprises us with the unexpected, spoke to her instead about renewal. If that disappoints you, and you begin to think, "But that's dodging the issue," read on and see what Jesus did about the race question in Samaria. He attacked it head on, first by dealing with the imperative of renewal, of personal change, and then by *doing* something about it.

He decided to stay and live in that center of racist hate for two days. And when he left, those anti-Jewish Samaritans said about this Jew, "He is the Saviour of the world." Jesus never dodged an issue in his life.

You see Jesus began with a question even more important than the race question, not what color, what race am I, but "Who am I?" It was the question she forgot to ask. And he said, "If you only knew..." The answer to the question she forgot to ask is the beginning of the answer to all our questions for until we know who He is, there are no final answers. Until then there is no end to racism; until then there is no peace, no deliverance from sin, no power, no growth, and no rest for the weary; only the always unfulfilled hopes of our thirsty, unrenewed humanity. Jesus said, "Drink of the well water, and you will be thirsty again. But if you knew who it was who just asked *you* for a drink, and asked *him* for a drink instead, you could drink and *never* be thirsty again." "If you only knew..."

How important it is to know to whom we are talking and what we should be talking about. A friend of ours, a missionary to Korea, retired to Scotland after World War II. He lived with his wife near a country chapel and on Saturdays his wife used to bring flowers to prepare the sanctuary for the Sabbath services. One Saturday as she went to open the chapel she found three people were already there, three women. They were gathered around the organ. The older woman was playing hymns, and two younger ones were leaning over her shoulder looking at the hymnal and singing with her. It was rather dark in the chapel, and Mrs. Macrae couldn't quite see who they were but she didn't think it right for strangers to be making themselves so much at home without permission, so she went up and said, "I don't think I know you, do I?" And the older woman turned around and said, "Oh, I think you probably do." And as the light fell on her face Mrs. Macrae recognized the Queen Mother. The two younger women were Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret. They had walked over from the summer castle of Balmoral nearby. And Mrs. Macrae stammered, and almost dropped the flowers in an unrehearsed attempt at a very low curtsy. Everything changed when she knew who they were.

But the greatest change comes when we know who Christ is. Renewal is *in Christ*, but the woman by the well didn't know who he was, so nothing changed. She had her own well water. She didn't know she needed more. She had her Samaritan Pentateuch. She didn't know she needed the gospel. She was satisfied with her ancestors, especially Jacob. She didn't know she needed Jesus. So she didn't think she needed renewal... and above all she didn't want a Jew to tell her so.

I know Presbyterians a little like that. We don't like being told we need renewal. Even when I know better, there are times I act very much

like the woman at the well. I'm so proud of our church and our great Presbyterian heritage, and I think our form of government is the best and fairest of any ecclesiastical system I know, but I've discovered that to some people that attitude makes me look as though I thought more of the church and its councils than of the One who is above all assemblies and councils, Jesus Christ, the only Head of His Church. We Presbyterians often say we always need reforming; we always need renewing too. We need to walk daily with the One who "leads us beside the still waters; who restores [who renews] our souls."

For almost 40 years now more or less, like the children of Israel, we have been wandering through a dry and thirsty land. We are declining in numbers, (we lost 40,000 members last year; by contrast, the Presbyterian Church of Korea *gained* 90,000, and that was in only one of Korea's Presbyterian denominations). We are declining in influence, declining in financial stability and missionary outreach, and I am afraid that a great part of our American Presbyterian problem is that we are declining in that most elusive, most indefinable, yet most important sphere of all, a sphere I find hard to label in this secularized culture of ours. Call it the spiritual. Even the polls show that Presbyterians speak with less and less conviction and more and more evasion about the things that are eternal, about the promise of the waters of eternal life. And Jesus says to us, what he said to the woman at the well, "If only you knew..."

Forty years is enough; it's the proper Biblically precedented time for desert wandering. Enough is enough. It is time to leave the desert behind and cross through the waters of Jordan into the Promised Land. It is high time for renewal.

But did you see the letter to the editor in one of our Presbyterian magazines a few weeks ago? It was a quite appropriate call to all of us to be less self-righteous and more loyal and connected as Presbyterians, but as it came out in print it sounded more ecclesiastically fundamentalist than the writer may have intended. He wrote:

I am not at all pleased that the moderator...and stated clerk of the General Assembly...are lending their names and presence to a "call to renewal" conference...in [St. Louis]. Rather than appearing before those who would repudiate the very foundations of our Presbyterian heritage, they should be out among the people...that are maintaining the connectional strength of our denomination... (*Outlook*, Feb. 20, 1989)

The man is absolutely right about maintaining the connectional strength of our denomination. That is one of the principal reasons why we are here, because we are connectional Presbyterians and want to stay that way. Representative, participatory connectionalism is a principle of

government that is one of the Presbyterian church's finest contributions to American democracy. But beware of turning into fighting, ecclesiastical fundamentalists about it. In the structures of the church of Jesus Christ, connectionalism without renewal is like tying one dead dog to another.

The woman at the well was connected, and the connection meant a great deal to her. She was better connected, she thought, than those proud southern Israelites in Jerusalem, for like all Samaritans she traced her connections from Samaria straight back to Jacob, not through Judah, but through Joseph, the greatest of Jacob's sons. "This is Jacob's well," she said. "It's ours." She was well connected. And Jesus simply said, "It's the wrong connection."

Well, you know he didn't say it quite that way. What Jesus said to the woman didn't deny the importance of the connection. Rather, he pointed her to a higher connection. Jacob? Fine! "*But if you only knew who I am...*"

The primary connection is not organizational. We need organization. It's like the well water, and of course we need it. But the life-giving dynamic in the Christian connection is the "living water," the gift of God through the Spirit that brings us into union with Jesus Christ. There is nothing unPresbyterian about that. It's in the Shorter Catechism on which generations of us were raised. I can still repeat the rolling phrases, but I won't, except for a part which describes renewal, though it does not call it that:

[It] is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin...and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel. (Q. 31)

The words fit the conversion experience also, but there is more to it than conversion. Calvin knew about sudden conversions. That's how he once described his own, "God by a sudden conversion, subdued my mind and made it teachable..." (commentary on the *Psalms*, introduction). But he is very clear that the work of the Holy Spirit is a work in us that does not stop with conversion, nor is it to be confused with "joining the church." It is renewal. It is a "calling," a continuing work, a renewing change. The catechism calls it an "embracing of Christ," not a quick shaking of hands, hello and good-bye. It is a taste of the "living water" offered by Christ to all who will receive it, and that

"living water is the secret energy by which [the Spirit] restores life in us and maintains and brings it to perfection." (*Calvin's Commentary* on John 4:11)

The "secret energizing" by the Spirit that "restores," "maintains," and "perfects" our life in Christ. In our Reformed theology, that is the secret of renewal in Christ. It is God's work, not ours. With all Calvin's love

of order, his insistence on a rational and systematic theology, and his confidence that the church can be reformed with proper attention to theology and ecclesiastical discipline, Calvin was very careful to give precedence to the quickening of life renewed at the "ever-flowing fountain" of the Holy Spirit.

But in the careful balance which is our Presbyterian heritage in theology, the human factor always plays a part. However much the initiative belongs to God's grace, the exercise of that grace in the processes of renewal is very much a human obligation. Calvin, surrounded as he was by the towering peaks of the French and Swiss Alps, speaks of it in terms of climbing higher. "It behooves the godly mind to climb still higher, to the height to which Christ calls his disciples..." (On Matt. 16:24). Renewal, you see, is the believer *in* Christ, climbing higher *to* Christ, by the power of the Spirit of Christ.

"Climb higher," says Calvin. But how? If anyone should have known the complete impossibility of climbing higher by ourselves, Calvin should. This is how one of his French biographers describes him:

"His circulation was out of order... His toes were swollen with gout. Chronic rheumatism forced him to hobble about dragging his right leg... He had stones in his kidneys...difficulty breathing. He spat blood. He was regularly shaken by spasms of fever..." (Albert-Marie Schmidt, *Calvin*, p. 71f.)

There were days when he could barely climb up the steps to his high pulpit. But he said, "Climb higher."

How can we? Certainly not simply by wanting to, or by wishing it. Above all we won't do it by reassuring each other that we don't have to "climb higher," that we don't need renewal. If by ourselves we are not able to find renewal, as our Reformed faith tells us; if renewal is *in* Christ, and *by* the Spirit, how do we do any climbing? Do we just lie back and float. Not in Reformed theology! The answer is in another central teaching of our Reformed faith, namely, that renewal comes through the "proper and faithful use of the outward and ordinary means of grace." There are three of them: Word, Sacraments and Prayer; and perhaps because there is nothing new and startling about being told to read the Bible, and attend communion, and pray, we don't really pay too much attention to any of them any more. But that is, in large part, what Presbyterians mean by "climbing higher" in the Christian life. It's in the Catechism (Q. 88 ff.). But we don't pay much attention to the Catechisms any more, either, do we. I wonder how we can expect to remain Presbyterian without the catechism to teach us at least the beginnings of a theology of renewal.

The most important of those three "outward and ordinary" means of grace is the *Word of God* the Bible. That was certainly true in Calvin's life. His discovery of the Bible came before his conversion and was almost as sudden. He remained a classicist far closer to the Renaissance than the Reformation, until he became fascinated as a scholar by the work of Erasmus, the greatest humanist of the times. Erasmus was engaged in uncovering the original Greek text of the New Testament, and once Calvin found the New Testament, for the rest of his life he was both intellectually and spiritually constantly renewed by Scripture. In a popular English edition his Bible commentaries alone fill 48 volumes, and in Geneva he preached and lectured from Scripture texts every day.

But I have had Korean Presbyterians who don't know us very well though they watch us very closely, say to me, "You American Presbyterians pay more attention to your Book of Order than you do to the Bible." It is not true. But if we give that impression we had better be careful, and the answer is not to throw away the Book of Order but to recover our Reformation emphasis on the primacy of Scripture, the first of "the ordinary means of grace."

The second of the means of grace is the *Sacraments*. Evangelicals are rather weak here. I was born and bred low-church, not much of a sacramentarian. But it is the sacramental that brings the whole church into the processes of renewal, and keeps that process from becoming idiosyncratically personal. In the sacraments of the church connectionalism comes alive and rescues the renewed from schism and heresy. Even Bible study, if it remains a solitary pursuit, unchecked and unconfirmed by the whole fellowship of believers, can end in disaster. Korea has given us a fearful example of that. The Rev. Moon Sun-Myung and his Unification Church, rudely called "Moonies" (which is not a good way to speak of them), quote the Bible copiously in all their training materials. But when Mr. Moon cut himself off from the church, how shockingly he began to misinterpret the Bible. He cut down the Jewish Christ as a failure. He began to believe that he could be a better Christ; and at one time, I have heard, he suggested that his third wife might be the Holy Spirit. *"If he only knew..."* Christians need the whole church and the unifying, renewing, confirming strength of the sacraments.

The third means of grace is prayer. "The principal exercise of our faith is prayer," said Calvin (*Sermons*, Matt. 26:40-5). But if he were to come back today to check up on his churches of the Reformed tradition, I think he'd climb back into his high pulpit to tell us in his understated but intense way that we need more exercise. Affluent, sophisticated, mainline Christians that we are, we talk about prayer sometimes as if

it were an unseemly, Pietist escape route from responsible Christian confrontation with the real world. Maybe that's part of our Presbyterian problem. We leave prayer to the Nazarenes and Pentecostals and Baptists. But Calvin married a Baptist, remember? That's not an unforgivable sin. He married a praying Baptist, and Calvin has more to say about prayer than most Presbyterians realize.

Let me mention a few of the high points. You can find them and many more in two very handy little volumes of selections from Calvin, one edited by John Leith (*The Christian Life*), the other by William Keesecker (*A Calvin Reader*). I'll paraphrase what Calvin says:

First, he says, be simple. Don't try to be eloquent. Pray through Christ, he says, for He is our only mediator. Be worshipful, not demanding, not always asking God to do things for us. Be regular; remember that Daniel set aside three regular times a day for prayer, not counting his "constant," intermittent prayers. Count on the undeniable fact that God *will* hear your prayer; He promised to. And finally, don't pray too long, at least in public.

I like that last point. Long prayers are rarely signs of renewal, and to our critics they are most often taken as signs of spiritual pride. The word I hear most whispered about us and about this conference is "self-righteous," and if that label fits us we are dead. In that connection, we should remember the parable of the Pharisee and the publican and, in our minds, apply it more to ourselves, perhaps like this:

Two men—it could just as well be two women—went up to St. Louis to pray; one an evangelical, the other a concerned observer. And the evangelical prayed a beautiful prayer. "Lord, I thank thee for all you've done for me. Thank you for saving me and for making me new. Thank you for making me a tithing, praying, believing Presbyterian. Thank you, Lord. Amen." And the observer, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And the Lord said, "I tell you this man, not the other, went home renewed."

That short prayer of the publican could bring more renewal to this conference, and save us from more self-righteousness than any long, loud criticisms of a church which is not perfect, and never will be perfect, but which we love very much. "God be merciful to me a sinner." No one meets the real Christ without coming face to face with what we all really are, sinners. No road to renewal can ever by-pass the awful reality of personal sin and the need for repentance.

I hear disturbing echoes in Christian circles of a theologically empty kind of "I'm OK; you're OK" theology that doesn't ring true. It is not

even Presbyterian. It is a theology of cheap grace and listen to what John Calvin, says flatly about that:

Those who under pretext of grace indulge themselves...and seek not repentance, cannot flatter themselves that they are God's people for...repentance is necessary. (Comm. on Jer. 24:7)

Jesus didn't say to the woman, "You're OK." He said, "You're a sinner." He said, "The man you are now living with is not your husband." But how gentle he was, forthright but gentle. Some of us, the more earnest we become against sin, the more we leave love out of our preaching. Not Jesus. Despite all the woman's anxious attempts to change the subject, he led her to the question she had been avoiding all along. She had never asked the most important question in the world, "Who are you?" But Jesus answered it anyway, "I am the Messiah."

And everything changed. Renewal itself changed. It turned from the inside toward the outside and became mission. When the woman saw Jesus for the first time as He really is, she left her jar of well water, left him talking with his disciples, and went back into the village with such a piece of good news that she could no longer keep it to herself. What she said must have sounded much like what Jesus had said to her. "If you only knew..." "If you only knew who it was I've just been talking to!" The woman who was less than an ideal woman suddenly became a model for all women, and for all men too for that matter, a model for evangelism and mission. I know that is an exaggeration. We don't have enough information about her or about what happened to her for a sweeping statement like that. But even in this short account, I do see in her the makings of a model for mission. In Christ, renewal turns to mission. It has to. If it ends with ourselves it becomes self-righteousness. But when it leads out in witness to the world, it bubbles up and out and forever into eternity. We were once "waterless wells"; in Christ we become channels for the waters of life, and the bread of life, and for the joy and hope of life eternal.

I have never lived through an extended famine, even in Asia where famines are all too fearfully common. But when Eileen and I were assigned for a while after the Korean war as missionaries in the hills of southeast Korea we learned something about famines. A few summers earlier the tanks and fires of war had so ravaged the valleys and killed or driven away the farmers that whole areas were left without food. By the time we arrived the worst was past though a good part of our time was still taken up with the distribution of relief supplies, and we kept hearing the pitiful stories of the survivors.

"When there is no food," they said, "the people eat bark. They strip the trees to eat the bark. And many die." So of course we fed them. Bread for the world is part of our global task. What kind of a Christian mission would it have been, had we not given bread, real bread to the starving.

Yet as in the meeting at the well, there is something more to the mission than ordinary bread and water; there is something that must be said that will carry the mission deeper into human need, and farther into eternity than well-water and bread. For that kind of water leaves them thirsty, and the best food in the world is still bark, until someone says, "*If you only knew...*"

If Christians won't tell them, who will? Who else knows that Jesus is the renewer, the Christ of the living water, the Christ who is the "bread of life," and "the only Saviour of the world"? Who else can say to this hungry, thirsty world, "*If you only knew who [He] is...*", you would never need to thirst again.

Korean Christians are no more perfect than American Presbyterians, but are far more unembarrassed than most of us about telling others the good news of the gospel. I have been challenged over and over again by the contagious, unashamed, happy way in which Korean laymen and laywomen speak to anyone who will listen of the great joy that has come to them in knowing Jesus Christ.

Otto DeCamp, one of our colleagues in Korea, tells of how he was out in a country church one Sunday examining candidates for church membership. It isn't always easy to join a Korean church. You have to learn to read, so you can read the Bible. You have to memorize the catechism, and thus know some theology. You have to wait two years, and prove by your life and by your faithful attendance in worship that you are serious about being a Christian. One of the candidates that day was a dear old Korean grandmother, a simple woman. And one of the catechism questions was, "Where is the Lord Jesus today?" The proper answer to that question in the Korean catechism—to make sure that those who want to become church members know about the resurrection, was "He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father..." But she gave the wrong answer. She looked up happily and with a sweet smile said, "Where is He now? Why he's here in my heart." And they smiled at her and said, "That's right."

And of course she was right. That's what renewal in Christ is all about. "You in Christ," and "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). If you know that, don't leave here telling people, "Look, I'm renewed." That's self-righteousness. Go back and tell them who Jesus is.

## Response

### Some Concerns About Renewal

Rev. Dr. C. Kenneth Hall  
Moderator, 200th General Assembly, PC(USA)  
Butler, Pennsylvania

I speak for all of us when I express my appreciation to Dr. Moffett for the fine way in which he has started this conference upholding the foundation of all renewal which is Jesus Christ. I could probably save us all a lot of time if I made my response to his presentation simply a loud and enthusiastic amen! But you aren't going to get off that easily.

I suspect that those of us who are respondents at this conference will be speaking out of the context of our personal experiences. Inevitably so. We are the products of those forces that shape us and mold us. We see through the prisms of our experiences. And so I speak out of the context of this year in my life. The past ten months have not been typical for me! I have attended enough presbytery meetings to last for the rest of my days! If I never hear another presbytery debate the proposed changes in the Book of Order, I will be well satisfied. But I have spent a great deal of time in the ecclesiastical side of the church, and that will shape my remarks now. Out of the experiences of this year, I have developed some concerns which Dr. Moffett has alluded to in his paper. And since I still think of myself as a pastor, I want to single out three of them.

Sam has raised the issue of connectionalism. In a metaphor that I think is delightful, he speaks of connectionalism without renewal as tying two dead dogs together. And yet I suspect for most of us in this room, the danger is not connectionalism without renewal but is rather renewal without connectionalism. Those of us who are of a conservative persuasion theologically have a tendency—when things in the church are not going the way we want them to—to pick up our ecclesiastical marbles and go home. We retain the name Presbyterianism, but in practice we may opt out of the connectional system. It is true as Dr. Moffett has pointed out, that there is a fundamentalism associated with connectionalism, one that tends to make it the litmus test of all else. But it is also true that there can be a kind of inverted fundamentalism which prides itself on isolating itself from any practical connection with a denomination. When this happens there are several unfortunate results. To begin with,

we deprive the whole church of that unique contribution we are able to make because of our particular theological stance. The church is truncated and is no longer representative of the whole range of concerns. When we pull back, we weaken the church. A vital element is mission. Whole areas of the church's life are missing—that element we can supply. But it also means that there are parts of the church's witness which we surrender by default. A classic example is the church's social witness. Traditionally, that has not been high on any conservative agenda. The result is that it has become a monopoly of those at the other end of the theological spectrum. But social witness is too important to become the private preserve of any one group. It belongs to the whole church and we need to be a part of it. The way in which the General Assembly handled the paper on Christian Obedience is a good illustration of what can be accomplished when we get involved in that process.

In short, what I'm pleading for is a connectionalism that grows out of our renewal in Christ. Get active and slough it out in the trenches of presbyteries and synods. Don't surrender the field but be a part of it.

A second area where Dr. Moffett has sparked my concern is that of church membership. He said that "conversion is not to be confused with joining the church." He said, "The catechism calls it an embracing of Christ, not a quick shaking of hands—hello and goodbye." Again, I have to say, amen. One of my burdens this year has been to try to close the back door of the church. We must stop this process by which people join the church only to become inactive a few years later and have their names removed from the roll. We are hemorrhaging out that back door. And in large part I believe this happens because we do not confront people with the claims of Jesus Christ when they join the church. We have allowed ourselves to get caught up on the success syndrome which measures everything by numbers. As a result we seem more interested in making members than in making disciples. We seem to feel that if we get too theological about church membership and discipleship, people will get turned off. We fail to realize that unless we get theological, they will never get turned on. When we water down the claims of discipleship, we weaken the church and we cheat the people involved. We give them a pale substitute for Christianity and allow them to think it is the real thing. Dr. Samuel Shoemaker once said, "We count Christians when we ought to weigh them. The important question is, are they growing?"

Finally, Dr. Moffett said, "Renewal turns to mission. It has to. If it ends with ourselves, it becomes self-righteousness." If it does not turn to mission, the renewal itself becomes suspect. Now it is always a temptation for moderators to think they have a better view of the state

of the church than they really do. They sometimes think that because they do a lot of traveling and talking that they therefore have an accurate feeling for the pulse of the church. Accepting that caveat, I can say that there is one impression I have picked up this year. It is that across the Presbyterian Church (USA), there is a tremendous hunger for mission. The St. Louis Assembly established two priorities for our church in evangelism and mission, and almost everywhere I have gone, people have responded to these with enthusiasm. These are priorities behind which our whole church can unite. I sense that most Presbyterians right now are tired of devoting effort and energy to structure and machinery and want to get on with the real business of the church. But there is a fatal attraction there. Presbyterians seem to have a real fetish about organization and structure. When it comes to doing things decently and in order, we take back seat to no one. We thrive on tinkering with the machinery. Part of the reason is that we feel comfortable there. We know what we're doing. We're safe. It doesn't contain any surprises for us. But when we start moving out in mission, who knows what God might have in store for us. In mission, we are suddenly no longer in control of the process. And we don't like that. But through our renewal in Christ, we are called to set out in mission—like Abraham not knowing where we may be going, but going out confident that God is calling us and will lead us. We who are at this conference are committed to mission. The time is ripe for us to provide leadership to the whole church.

One last word. That woman at the well in Samaria did not realize it at first, but she was being given a moment of grace. Christ, the Savior, had come to her in a unique opportunity and was calling on her to seize that opportunity. I believe that God is giving our church a unique moment of grace. I believe that this conference and all of its potential is a part of that moment of grace. I hope while we are here we will all commit ourselves to seizing that moment and allowing God to use us and our church. To use the old words—our future is as bright as the promises of God. Let's lay hold on them.

1989

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*a call to*  
**RENEWAL**

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Conference on Renewal  
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